

High Chinese Defector Is Linked To Spy Charges Against Analyst

By STEPHEN ENGELBERG

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 31 — The espionage case against a retired Central Intelligence Agency analyst began in 1983 with a tip from a Chinese defector, Government sources said today.

Prosecutors have said in court documents that the analyst, Larry Wu-Tai Chin, had admitted to Federal agents that he was a spy for the Chinese. According to a motion filed by prosecutors today, Mr. Chin was impressed at the agents' knowledge of his activities, so much so that he speculated aloud that his principal Chinese contact might have defected to the United States.

The motion did not disclose whether Mr. Chin's suspicions were accurate, but intelligence sources said today that the case arose from information provided by a Chinese official who fled to the West.

The prosecutors' motion, filed in Federal District Court in Alexandria, offers a rare glimpse into the techniques used by F.B.I. agents to elicit admissions from a spy suspect. It describes the dramatic moment on Nov. 22 when two F.B.I. agents confronted Mr. Chin in his Virginia apartment with what the bureau says was evidence of 30 years of espionage activity.

Talk of Double Agent

The document filed today said that Mr. Chin first denied the charges, then offered to be a double agent for American intelligence and finally gave details of his career as a spy for the Chinese beginning in 1943.

Mr. Chin has pleaded not guilty. His attorneys have moved to suppress his statement to the agents on the ground that the F.B.I. violated his constitutional right to counsel and that he had been coerced.

The document filed by prosecutors today was a response to this motion.

It quotes Mr. Chin as questioning whether the agents had sufficient evidence, asking, "How do I know you're not bluffing?"

In response, prosecutors said, Mark Johnson, an F.B.I. agent, described a September 1983 trip to China in which Mr. Chin was said to have met with Ou Qiming, described as his Chinese handler. Mr. Johnson said that Mr. Chin talked to Mr. Ou of the possibility of recruiting a fellow C.I.A. employee as a spy. He also mentioned his marital difficulties.

Mr. Chin then told the agents, "You have details that only Ou knew," according to the motion.

"Chin said the details about his wife were only known by Ou and asked where the agents obtained their information," the motion said. Mr. Chin, it said, "speculated that Ou had defected."

The Government sources, who asked not to be identified, would not comment on whether Mr. Ou was the defector they said was involved in the case.

Mr. Chin worked for nearly 30 years for the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, an arm of the C.I.A. that translates and interprets broadcasts and publications. Administration officials have said that because of his language skills Mr. Chin was also used by other sections of the C.I.A. and had access to virtually every classified intelligence document on the Far East for a period of years.

The F.B.I. said in an affidavit filed last month that from 1961 to 1967, Mr. Chin met with Mr. Ou and others while visiting Hong Kong.

Contact in Canada

In 1976, the F.B.I. affidavit said, Mr. Ou gave Mr. Chin procedures to be used to reach Chinese agents in Canada.

The motion said that when the agents appeared at Mr. Chin's apartment and identified themselves, Mr. Chin said, "Why sure, come on in." They sat at the dining room table and said they were investigating "the passage of classified information to the Chinese Intelligence Service."

Mr. Chin denied any involvement in the case, the motion said.

Mr. Johnson of the F.B.I. read details of Mr. Chin's 1982 trip to Peking. "Chin appeared surprised with the detailed information," the motion said.

The agents then said they had been investigating the case a long time, the motion said. It continued: "They had come to offer him a chance to explain what happened. They told him if he didn't want to talk to them that they would get up and leave and present the case to the Department of Justice."

According to the motion, Mr. Chin said, "Maybe I should seek legal counsel."

Not Arrested at First

Mr. Johnson said Mr. Chin was not under arrest and was free to call an attorney, the motion said. The F.B.I. agent identified himself as an attorney.

After being confronted with the details that he thought only Mr. Ou could have known, Mr. Chin offered to confirm or deny what the agents knew, the motion said. They refused this offer. According to the motion, Mr. Chin said "it would take a long time for him to tell everything" and that he wanted to think it over and decide the following day whether to cooperate.

The agents then told him, "This was his only chance to cooperate," the motion said.

After a pause, Mr. Chin offered to work as a double agent for the United States. The agents said they were not authorized to approve such an arrangement and they could only relay what he had to say to their supervisors.

"He said he would start with an outline and go back and fill it out," the motion said. "He then began with 1943."